

WASHINGTON POST AND
TIMES HERALDMystery in Moscow

Something Important Astir Within Red Bloc

By Chalmers M. Roberts

American officials believe that something quite important is going on behind the Iron Curtain, something which could vastly affect both foreign and domestic policies inside the Soviet Union and within the entire Communist bloc.

One key official goes so far as to say he feels there is "a certain sense of disarray in Moscow."

Officials cite a long list of curious incidents, the latest of which is the baffling case of former Soviet Foreign Minister V. M. Molotov. In Moscow yesterday Soviet Foreign Ministry officials insisted they had "absolutely no news" about the announced return of Molotov to a post in Vienna—announced, but for unexplained reasons so far not carried out.

In the last day or two there have been indications that Molotov has been writing some sort of explanation of his position which could be used to smooth over the internal Communist row. This could account for the delay in his return to Vienna.

The mystery in Moscow is quite obviously related to the almost open political war between the policies of Soviet Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev and those of Red China's Mao Tse-tung. The Molotov affair, many here believe, indicates there has been an important internal Soviet argument over the direction of the Communist Party.

Not Good for West

On one point there is wide agreement in Washington: Whatever the intent of the Communist leaders, they are not necessarily good news for the West. However, this judgment probably should be held in abeyance until more facts seep through the Iron Curtain.

The current series of Moscow talks on the Berlin issue between Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and American Ambassador Melvyn E. Thompson can read two ways, officially. They could be following a normal course of Soviet diplomacy, or they could be in form of stalling, test, or ever arguments are produced.

This is the strongest language yet. It obviously describes the Moscow-Peking problem, not just the row with little Albania. The current

other reactions, which includes Khrushchev himself, and his allies, toward the popular Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which is writing one?

Stories from Moscow yesterday indicated the Soviet Foreign Office was showing anxiety about the perspective question. Western newsmen about Molotov's movement. Western Soviet Embassy officials said he was expected there in the next few days.

About one thing there is no doubt. This is the mounting rivalry between pro-Moscow and pro-Peking factions in Asia and Africa. In Burma only last week a group of pro-Peking Communist students rioted during a visit there of an East German, pro-Khrushchev, youth group.

The evidence is that Peking is busy trying to subvert pro-Moscow Communist parties all around the globe outside the bloc itself. In North Viet-Nam, it is said, the older leaders including Ho Chi-minh are pro-Moscow but the younger ones lean to Peking.

It now appears that at the Communist Party Congress in Moscow last fall, attended by comrades from all world parties, there was a discussion, as recently described by Hungary's Janos Kadar, "as to whether the Socialist (i.e. Communist) world and the International Communist movement must have one or several centers."

This looks like the first open admission that the issue of "polycentrism" had been discussed at the highest Communist conclave. Kadar, a Khrushchev adherent, of course, dismissed the idea. But as Walter Z. Laqueur writes in the current issue of the New Leader, "we are now witnessing the emergence of half a dozen or more Communist groups or factions." An article by Gordon Brook-Shepherd in The Reporter details the "Red rivalry in the Black continent."

It is just this sort of thing against which Molotov has warned. The indications are that these are the matters of internal thaw. Molotov's supporters believe there is a kind of internal split which can be described as the old term "Stalinism." Molotov is a statesman and statesman and the more fact of Khrushchev's announcement that Molotov was going to Vienna is taken as significant by some, at least.

Molotov's return means that the Iron Curtain, may indeed reflect a most serious moment in Khrushchev's career. But we shall have to wait a while longer to know what each a firm judgment.